

Hampton CITY PAGE

Your Tax Dollars at Work

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE CITY OF HAMPTON ON 1ST & 3RD THURSDAYS

What Would You Do If You Were Owed \$30 Million?

Would You Write A Letter?

Hampton's Schools Are Not Receiving Their Entitled State Funding

There's no question that educating our children is a high priority. Our young people will face many new challenges in the years to come. They are our beacon for the future. That's why having a quality education is essential.

However, according to the state's own analysis, cities' schools in Virginia are being under-funded by \$1.5 billion per year - that's state funds that should be coming to our cities for education, but are not.

In Hampton, that translates to about \$30 million per year.

Youth Impacts

The impacts on our children throughout the Commonwealth are obvious:

- Congressional Quarterly's State Fact Finder reveals that Virginia ranked 49th in the nation in state aid per pupil in 2000-2001. Only Nevada invests less state money in her children.
- In four of the major 12th grade statewide SOL tests - English, Algebra II, Biology and US History - preliminary analysis indicates that 15% to 25% of the students failed to achieve a 70% score. State studies have



Youth: Our beacon for the future

shown that school failure rates on the SOL tests closely correlate with the percent of schoolchildren from economically disadvantaged families. These are the children who are hurt the most by inadequate state funding for education.

- Local taxpayers often dig into their pockets to make up the difference. But even with these supplements, Virginia's average teacher salary has fallen approximately \$3,000 behind the national average. That means talented teachers have a variety of options that may be more lucrative than what Virginia cities can offer.
- In the 2002 session, the General Assembly eliminated educational programs, including:

- ✓ Maintenance funds for schools
- ✓ Additional teachers
- ✓ SOL teaching materials and teacher training
- ✓ Truancy elimination
- ✓ Reading recovery

How serious is this? As noted earlier, in Hampton it means that local taxpayers subsidize the state by \$30 million per year for local education. What could Hampton, and other cities, do if the state

was paying its fair share? More computers in the classroom? Higher salaries to attract quality teachers? Some property tax relief for taxpayers?

Those are moot questions because the funds are simply not there. The losers in this scenario are our local tax payers ... and our children.

Write Your Legislators

Some members of our General Assembly have been sensitive to these issues and have tried to fix them. If you are a concerned citizen who feels strongly about this, you may want to contact your elected officials about the need to invest in our children and our future.

For more information on how you can become involved, go to www.hampton.gov and click on "What's Hot."

Unity Talks In Our City: Here's How You Can Join

What happens when a diverse group of Hampton citizens meets on a regular basis to share ideas about cultural and race relations?

For one thing, new approaches to addressing public issues emerge.

For another, the participants develop trusting relationships, through face-to-face dialogue.



Welcome to "Community Dialogue/Action", a program sponsored by the Hampton Citizens Unity Commission (CUC) and a diverse group of citizens known as the Hampton Unites Coalition.

"The program helps all kinds of people get together, and be open with one another," said CUC Executive Director John L. Johnson. "When people consider different points of view on an issue, they uncover common ground and find better solutions."

The community dialogues are conducted within small, diverse groups of 8 to 10 participants. The groups meet for 90 minutes per week, for 6 weeks. Each group is led by 2 impartial facilitators. Each group sets its own ground rules for respectful, honest and productive discussion.

"The groups do not require consensus, but uncover areas of agreement and common concern," said Johnson.

Two small "pioneer" groups recently completed their dialogues. New dialogues will begin in mid-February, and the CUC is currently recruiting participants and facilitators for these. "Everyone is invited to join in this exciting venture in democracy," said Johnson.

But space is limited, so call 728-3279 to reserve your seat. Or complete your registration on line at www.hampton.gov/unity.

Hampton's Community Plan Reaches Important Step

Hampton's Community Plan, presently underway, is an innovative planning approach that will guide how our city moves forward into the future.

As a process, it provides a stronger link between the short-term programs of the city's Strategic Plan and the long-term physical recommendations of the city's Comprehensive Plan.

"For instance, as we refine our plans to further stimulate the business community within Hampton, we also need to consider land use, transportation, and a variety of other issues," said Director of Planning Terry O'Neill. "That's why we're combining the two planning processes - and calling it the Community Plan."

"And rather than having the city create such a plan in a vacuum, it's important that our citizens have an opportunity to become involved in the process," he added. "That's what a Community Plan is all about."

The preparation of Hampton's Community Plan reached an important step in December with the hiring of a facilitator to assist the city work closely with the community. Michele Woods Jones of Cobb & Henry Training and Consulting Division will lead a team of facilitators that has a long history of community work in Hampton. For more info, call 727-6140.

Adopt-A-Senior Program Offers Protection

Many senior citizens have little or no interaction with others on a regular basis. An illness or injury can leave them helpless and unable to communicate their needs.

Through the Adopt-A-Senior program, deputies of the Hampton Sheriff's Office regularly visit senior citizens to check on their well-being and safety.

In 1994, members of the department's Civil Process unit began visiting local seniors who either lived alone or were homebound with no regular social contact. Since that time about 80 seniors have taken part in the program.

The officers also educate seniors on issues that directly affect them such as telemarketing scams and safety tips. Deputies also can assess if the senior requires assistance beyond the Sheriff's Office scope of operation.

With the department's participation in Triad (a program that brings local law enforcement organizations together with other senior service organizations) seniors may be referred to the proper organization for health care, housing needs, etc.

To request the Adopt-A-Senior service, call the Hampton Sheriff's Office Community Relations unit at 926-2540. You can also

visit www.hampton.gov and go to "City Departments," then to "Sheriff's Office." Once there, click onto "Community Relations." On that page, click onto "Adopt-A-Senior" under "Senior-Oriented Programs."

The Adopt-A-Senior web site page includes a form that can be filled out online to request the service.



January
COMMUNITY
EVENTS

17-19 THE 14TH ANNUAL HAMPTON ROADS HOME AND GARDEN EXPO.
General Admission \$7; children under 12 free.

20 UNITY RALLY, OLD HAMPTON COMMUNITY CENTER.
201 Lincoln St. Noon - 2 p.m.
Speeches on respect,

acceptance, unity and family.
For info call 727-1123.

22 CITY COUNCIL
7:30 p.m. Council Chambers (8th Floor, City Hall, 22 Lincoln Street).
For more information, call 728-3279 or go to www.hampton.gov/council/. The Hampton City Council meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month.

25 8 p.m. - TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET IN BLUE AND GREEN, A Tribute to Miles Davis. Its name derived from Native American folklore, The Turtle Island String Quartet has been a singular force in the creation of bold, new trends in chamber music ever since it was founded in 1986. General Admission \$20 and \$25. The American Theatre.

News and information in *City Page* shows your tax dollars at work. It combines information from city departments into one place, saves money and is timelier than previous newsletters. *City Page* is brought to you by the Public Communications Division of the City of Hampton

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